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ABSTRACT

To see what effect the 1975 Bateman-Cutlip Commission's recommendations have had on improving public relations education in the United States, 173 questionnaires were sent to colleges or universities with accredited or comprehensive programs in public relations. Responding to five basic assumptions underlying the commission's recommendations, about one-half of the schools agreed that specialization at the master's level may better prepare a student for a lifetime career in public relations, although a bachelor's degree should be suitable for a first job. About one-half also agreed that the commission's recommendations should conform to the accredited requirements of the American Council on Education for Journalism. (But this assumption also elicited the largest percentage of disagreement.) Opinion strongly favored the commission's assumption that it should change public relations education where necessary, rather than stick to the status quo. Sixty-six percent felt, along with the commission, that public relations should be part of a school or department of journalism. While agreeing with the commission's course recommendations in the humanities and the social and natural sciences, fewer schools accepted its recommendations in communications and business. As programs of schools never hearing of the commission are as close to the commission's recommendations as those with a copy of the report, the Bateman-Cutlip Commission appears to have had little effect in influencing the public relations curricula. (MM)

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ACADEMIC PUBLIC RELATIONS CURRICULA:

How They Compare with the Bateman-Cutlip Commission Standards

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INTRODUCTION

In 1973, PRSA and the Public Relations Division of AEJ jointly established a "Commission on Public Relations Education." This commission, co-chaired by J. Carroll Bateman and Scott M. Cutlip, issued its recommendations in 1975, most of which involved a proposed curriculum for the nation's public relations education programs. (I shall refer to this commission throughout this paper as the Bateman-Cutlip Commission or BCC.)

In 1982, seven years after the Bateman-Cutlip Commission issued its recommendations, one of my students and I studied the accredited programs to see whether their curricula reflected these recommendations. Because the results of that study were somewhat narrow in scope, I decided to broaden this research, and under a grant from the Foundation for Public Relations Research and Education, I included all schools that were said to have comprehensive programs. This paper contains the results of both phases of that study.

METHODOLOGY

In the first survey, we studied catalogs of the "home" schools of accredited programs, then sent our results to program heads for verification. Table I contains the results of that phase of study.

In conducting the second, funded survey, I sent 173 questionnaires and received 111 back, for a response rate of 64 percent. Of the 173 sent, 113 went to schools with PRSSA chapters (those identified in the 1982 PRSA Handbook) and 60 to schools without (taken from Where to Study Public

Relations by Kendall, Terhune, and Hesse). Chaptered schools responded at 68 percent, nonchaptered at 57. Results of that survey appear in Table II.

DISCUSSION

You can judge as to whether the response rate of 64 percent, given the population surveyed, was good or bad, but I found a surprise in the returns. I was surprised that those schools without PRSSA chapters were almost as likely to respond as those with chapters. I had hoped that all chaptered schools would respond and had expected at least a 90 percent response. On the other hand, I had thought that a 50 percent response from non-chaptered schools would be quite good. So apparently the existence of a PRSSA chapter is not a good indicator of a greater emphasis on public relations education than that in schools without PRSSA chapters, judging from their willingness to cooperate in this survey.

Another surprise was the relatively low level at which public relations is taught. Fully 63 percent of the programs are at the sub-department level, for that percent of the respondents said their program heads report to a chairman. Fewer than a fourth, 22 percent, are at the department level, with their heads reporting to a dean. Between these two levels are the "quasi-departments," consisting of nine percent, whose heads report to a director. Some five percent have no heads, since offerings at those schools consist of only a course or two, presumably included in the general professorial course loads.

Program Characteristics

"Sequence" is far and away the most common term used to designate a program, with 52 percent reporting this designation. "Emphasis," reported by 20 schools, follows as the second most popular title, at 18 percent. "Program" is used by five percent, "department" by 4.5. Other terms include "concentration" (three schools), "specialization" (three schools), "major" (four schools), "degree program" (one school), "area" (two schools), "advertising/public relations department" (one school), and "advertising/public relations sequence" (one school).

Asked at what level public relations should be taught, respondents were fairly evenly divided between "undergraduate only" and "both undergraduate and graduate." "Both undergraduate and graduate" won at 49 percent, but a whopping 42 percent said the undergraduate level was the proper place to teach public relations. "Graduate" came in at a poor third, with only four percent favoring that option. Only two respondents thought that public relations ought to have its own separate professional school, but one thought that graduate or professional school was the preferred milieu, while one said that public relations ought to be taught at all three levels--undergraduate, graduate, and professional school.

Probably to nobody's surprise, journalism leads all areas as the most popular location for public relations education, with 68 schools, or 61 percent. But this research showed that the swing away from journalism--to a combination of journalism with other areas into something called "communications," with several variations on that title--is still in progress in our

schools. Thirty respondents, or 27 percent, said their programs are in "communications" areas. Speech departments have slightly more than seven percent, and one program each is in these areas: business, interdepartmental, mass media arts, communication and journalism, and journalism and business (these latter two could also be called interdepartmental, I suppose).

Mandatory PRSSA Membership

When asked whether public relations students ought to be required to join PRSSA as a condition of their acceptance into a program, respondents literally shouted "no"! Still, 13 respondents, or 12 percent, believe majors ought to be required to join PRSSA (one school, in fact, now follows this practice). Three respondents said they didn't know, and one didn't answer, whether they approved this practice.

Asked about percentage of majors now in PRSSA, only four respondents reported 75-100 percent. Combined with 17 who said 50-75 percent, we can see that fewer than one fourth, or 18 percent, of our public relations programs have a majority of their majors in PRSSA. By far the greater number, almost a third, reported membership of 25-50 percent, while 18 percent said fewer than 25 percent of their majors are in PRSSA. As noted, some 36 percent of respondents have no PRSSA chapters.

Those schools with membership in the 25-50 percent range were much more likely to answer "no" to mandatory membership than any other percentage (in fact, no respondent said "yes" in this category, with something over 47 percent

of total respondents saying "no"). When programs had fewer than 25 percent membership, the "no" majority was not so great, 17 percent "no" compared to seven percent "yes." A three-to-one margin of "no" to "yes" occurred in schools with 50-75 percent membership, and in those with 75-100 percent, "no" and "yes" divided equally at 50 percent each.

Apparently, based on these figures, respondents in the highest category (75-100 percent) are as likely to favor mandatory membership as not; those in the lowest (fewer than 25 percent) are almost half as likely fo favor mandatory membership; but those of membership ranges between 25-75 percent are virtually unanimous in their opposition to mandatory membership (64 percent versus 4 percent).

Attitudes toward the Basic Assumptions

Five basic assumptions underlay the commission's recommendations, and my questionnaire attempted to elicit attitudes toward these assumptions. Assumption 1, with which nobody disagreed, says: "The student should receive a well-rounded education in the liberal arts and humanities, with appropriate emphasis on education in communications and public relations." However, two respondents marked "neutral" on that assumption and 17 did not answer. These 17 marked none of the five assumptions, for a 15 percent "could care less" rate. So we see a net 83 percent agreement with this assumption.

Assumption 2--"that a bachelor's degree level program . . . may prepare the student for his first few years of . . . practice, but for those planning a lifetime career . . . further

specialized education at the master's level is highly desirable" --brought substantially less agreement, with slightly more than half, or 55 percent, in agreement. Sixteen respondents, 14 percent, disagreed with this assumption, and 15 percent were neutral. Again, our 17 schools were out of it, joined by one more on this question for 16 percent who chose not to answer.

Assumption 3 says:

> That, since public relations practice is to a considerable extent concerned with effective communication (although certainly not to the exclusion of social analysis, management counseling and planning) the appropriate academic milieu . . . is a school or department of journalism . . . .

This assumption found 66 percent in agreement, nine percent who disagreed, and eight percent neutral. But our 18 "no answers" accounted for some 16 percent.

Assumption 4 brought the largest percentage of disagreement, and those who disagreed here did so rather vehemently, for this assumption brought forth marginal comment. This assumption has to do with accreditation, and it reads as follows:

> That the recommendations of the Commission should conform in a general way to the accreditation requirements of the American Council on Education for Journalism, the recognized accrediting organization for schools and departments of journalism in the United States . . . .

Agreeing with this assumption were 56 percent, or 62 respondents, and the percentage of disagreement jumped to 15 percent. Add the neutral 12 percent and 17 percent who chose not to answer to this 15 percent disagreement, and we find nearly half our respondents who show no agreement with this assumption.

Assumption 5, like Assumption 1, brought no disagreement, but this time we had a fairly sizeable group of 16 who marked "neutral" on this one. Add our 17 "no answers" to this group, and we have 30 percent who chose not to comment on this assumption, which reads:

> That the recommendations of the Commission should be guided by but not restricted by existing academic conventions. It is the stated purpose of the Commission to change public relations education where it should be changed--not to confirm the status quo.

BCC Curricula Influence

Now we shall come to grips with how the Bateman-Cutlip commission's coursework recommendations have influenced the curricula of our academic programs. I probably should have included a question in my survey to find out from respondents whether they had used the BCC's recommendations in structuring their curricula, but I chose not to do that because I thought any answers to that question would have damaged the objectivity I wanted to bring to the study. In analyzing the BCC's apparent effects on curricula, I decided to compare the commission's recommendations with (1) curricula of accredited programs; (2) curricula of programs with PRSSA chapters; and (3) curricula of programs without PRSSA chapters.

I decided to break schools with PRSSA chapters (chaptered schools) into two groups: (1) those chartered before the report (1968-75) and (2) those chartered after the report (1975-81). I'm not quite sure what a comparison of these groups shows, but I thought something might suggest itself from looking at the pre-BCC and the post-BCC. Finally, I compared those curricula whose respondents said they were unaware of

the BCC's recommendations to those who said they were. Figures for all these groups appear in Table II.

Fourteen respondents said they had never heard of the BCC report. Another 37, or one third, either had no copy of the report or did not respond to the question. Thus, only 60 respondents, or slightly more than half at 54 percent, said they had a copy of the report.

Responses to Individual Courses

As you would expect, some of the courses under the heading of "general education" ranked high in the returns, with offer rates of 95 percent for English, 97 percent for social science, 88 percent for the humanities, and 93 percent for natural science. But a sharp dropoff occurred for the next three courses: foreign language or area studies at 43 percent, statistics at 24 percent, and management (organizational structure and behavior) at 23 percent.

Under the next heading, "communications studies," results were equally disproportionate, with a high of 97 percent requiring coursework in "writing for the mass media" to a low of 20 percent who require their students to get involved in survey research. Advertising is apparently losing favor as a required course, for only about a third now require their students to take that course, but media law and ethics is a fairly strong requirement (75 percent). Copy editing shows a strong 68 percent requirement, and graphics is a fairly widespread requirement at 46 percent. Feature writing, however, is required by fewer than a third.

You would expect "introduction to public relations" to be required in all programs, but surprisingly it isn't. Some of the surveyed schools, particularly those from Where to Study Public Relations, really don't have a public relations program as such. So replies from some of the schools show the intro course as an elective. All accredited programs require the intro course, as do all chaptered schools chartered in 1968 through 1975. On the average, 92 percent of all the schools surveyed require the intro course.

A course in publicity media and campaigns shows extreme peaks and valleys, with a high of 86 percent to a low of 36. Within the range, we see 73, 80, and 46.

Public relations case problems is a more frequently offered course than you might suppose. More than half the programs, or 57 percent, require this course. Almost the same number, 51 percent, require an internship or practicum of their students.

Recommended elective courses for the public relations major did not fare at all well. Management communications rated at 17 percent, propaganda and public opinion at 17, and magazine editing at 15. You may refer to Table II for complete figures on required courses.

CONCLUSIONS

The Bateman-Cutlip Commission appears to have had little effect in influencing public relations curricula. Indeed, if we examine the programs of those respondents who never heard of the commission, we find that their curricula are about as close to the commission's recommendations as those that have had copies of the report.

This circumstance implies that most of the nation's educators have found the BCC recommendations not particularly useful, especially those suggestions for such non-traditional courses as foreign language and statistics.

Carroll Bateman and Scott Cutlip were asked to co-chair this commission because they observed, in a 1973 paper presented to the AEJ Public Relations Division, that there existed an "unsatisfactory and disparate state of public relations education in U.S. colleges and universities."

In the same year (1975) that the BCC issued its recommendations, John Hill, in an interview with Lou Golden, said that many schools teach journalism and communication arts but that "there is not much teaching of disciplines that would better prepare people for public relations counseling." Asked in the interview what should be taught, he said a program "ought to include some of the specific social studies like public opinion . . . as well as the broader sciences like social psychology and anthropology."

Hill had said, in a speech in Detroit in 1973, that public relations had reached a crossroads; he said it could become an advisory management function or simply a communication function--the tools function. I would suggest, based on this study, that Hill's ten-year-old observation is becoming fulfilled and that we, as public relations educators, have our feet firmly planted in one of these crossroads. We can paraphrase Robert Frost in his poem, "The Road Not Taken," and say,

> Two roads diverged in a wood, and I--
> I took the one most traveled by,
> And that has made all the difference.

TABLE I. COURSE REQUIREMENTS IN ACCREDITED PROGRAMS

NUMBER OF COURSES REQUIRED IN EACH CATEGORY	English Com. & Lit.	Social Sciences	Humanities	Natural Sciences	Foreign Language	Statistics	Management & Marketing	Speech	Computer Science	Accounting	Theory & Process of Comm.	Writing for Mass Media	Copyediting	Graphics	Advertising Principles	Media Law & Ethics	Feature Writing	Internship or Practicum	Pub. Op. Survey Research	Media Analysis	Intro to Public Relations	Publicity Methods	P.R. Case Problems	History of Journalism	Photography	Journalism Electives	Journalism Misc.	Minor (hours)	Miscellaneous	% Required
Ball State University	2	5	4	5			2				1	1		1	1		1		1	1	1			1		1	2	1		16	57
Boston University	3	6	2	1	2	1	2			1	1		1				1			1							2			5	57
Bowling Green State University	1	9	4	3		1	3			1	1	1	1		1		1			1	1	1	1			3-4		30q	3	71
California State Univ.-Fullerton	1	3	5	3	1			1		1	1				1		1			1		1		1		4	1	12	12	52
Colorado State University	2	5	2	4	1	1				1	1	1								1	1	1		1		3		21	10	57
Drake University	1	5	4	4			2			1	1		1	1	1					1	1		1			2	2	21	6	57
University of Florida	3	9	3	2-4	3			1			1	1			1	1		1		1						4	2	12	4	57
University of Georgia	4	6	1	4	3	1				1	1		1		1					1	1					5		30q	3	57
Kent State University	2	6	4	3			5	2		1		1		1	1	1				1	1				1	2	3		7	62
Univ. of Maryland-College Park	2	4	3	1		1		1	1			1	1			1		1	i	1	1					2-3	1	12-18	10	62
Northern Illinois University	2	2	3	BS 4	BA 5			1				1	1	1	1	1				1					1	4	2		14	62
Ohio University	2	10	8	3	3	1			2		1	1	1	1		1	1	1		1	1					7	2	36q	5	67
Ohio State University	2	5	4	4							1	1	1	1		1		1	1		1	1			1	4-6	1		14	62
University of Oklahoma	2	6	3	2-4							1	1			1	1				1		1		1	1	2-4	1		13	48
University of Oregon	3	15	5					1				1			1		1			1	1	1				8			20	43
San Jose State University	3	8	5	3			1	1				1				1	1		1	1	1	1				3	1	12	5	62
University of South Florida	2	2	2	2	2	1			1			2							1	1			1			5	2		21	43
Univ. of Southern California	3	4	6		3						1	1	1					1		1		1	1			3	1		15	48
Syracuse University	4	4	4	4	2	2			1			1		1		1		1	1	1	1					2	1	18	3	62
University of Tennessee	5	13		4	3		3	2		2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		1			1	3	4	16q	7	86
University of Texas-Austin	4	4		3	3						1	1	1	1			1			1	1					3	1		15	52
Texas-Tech University	4	6	4	4	4		1				1	1	1		1	1				1		1			1		5	18		62
West Virginia University	4	8	2	2	2	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	1			1		1	1		1	1	1			2-4		15	3	81

* AEJ/PR & PRSA Recommended PR Curriculum

q = Quarter Hours

TABLE II. PERCENTAGE OF RECOMMENDED BCC COURSES

COURSES	Accredited Programs	PRSSA 1968-75	PRSSA 1976-81	All PRSSA	No PRSSA	No BCC	All Programs
English	100	86.5	97	91.8	95	100	95
Social Science	100	97.3	94.1	93.2	95	100	97
Humanities	91	86.5	97	91.8	84.6	78.6	88
Natural Science	91	89.2	94.1	91.7	90	100	93
Foreign Language/Area Studies	57	45.9	32.4	39.2	48.7	35.7	43
Statistics	39	29.7	20.6	25	15.4	14.2	24
Organizational Structure/Behavior	25	28.2	23.5	25.9	15.8	21.4	23
Theory/Process of Communication	61	72.9	50	61.5	74.4	78.6	66
Writing for Mass Media	100	97.2	97	97	92.3	100	9
Copy Editing	57	72.9	61.8	67.5	79.5	71.5	68
Graphics	48	64.8	41.2	53	35.9	35.7	46
Advertising	22	29.7	35.3	32.5	38.5	42.9	33
Media Law/Ethics	74	72.9	70.6	71.8	84.6	78.6	75
Feature Writing	35	37.8	29.4	30.3	33.3	28.6	32
Introduction to Survey Research	30	40.5	20.6	30.5	17.9	21.4	27
Communication Media Analysis	26	18.9	18.2	18.6	15.4	21.4	20
Introduction to Public Relations	100	100	97	98.5	87.2	71.4	92
Publicity Media/Campaigns	48	86.5	73.5	80	46.2	35.7	62
Public Relations Case Problems	43	81	67.6	74.3	42.1	35.7	57
Internship/Practicum	52	45.9	54.5	50.2	43.6	57.1	51
Management Communications	*	21.6	21.9	21.8	13.2	7.1	17
Propaganda/Public Opinion	*	13.5	20.6	17	10.5	21.4	17
Magazine Editing	*	21.6	11.8	16.7	10.25	14.3	15
* NOT ON PREVIOUS SURVEY	N=23	N=37	N=34	N=71	N=40	N=14	N=111